

opening response by Governor Hernandez
Colon

Mr. Prime Minister, I am indeed pleased to visit you here in Aruba and to be so warmly welcomed by you and your people. I can assure you that this warmth is shared by your brothers in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

It was but a few months ago -- last July -- that I had the pleasure of receiving you at my office in La Fortaleza in San Juan, Puerto Rico. At that time we lay the bases for a cooperative endeavour in which our joint efforts would contribute to strengthening the bases of democracy throughout the Caribbean.

Several years ago, Puerto Rico accepted the challenge of providing aid and counsel to its neighbours throughout the Caribbean Basin in our efforts to provide jobs and incomes for our people.

Puerto Rico agreed to share its resources with its neighbours, as we consciously realized that our earlier entry into the field of actively promoting our island's economic development had given us a valuable head-start over the many other economies of the Caribbean.

Over the past two years we have successfully seen the establishment of some 45 complementary plants in the Caribbean which are linked to companies located and operating in Puerto Rico and which has already contributed to the creation of several thousands of jobs for the residents of these islands.

With the location in Puerto Rico of major transportation hubs by two of the larger U.S. air carriers -- Eastern and American airlines --

we are now in a position to contribute even more meaningfully to the development of the tourism economies of the nations of the Eastern Caribbean.

Finally, Mr. Prime Minister, I wish to person-

ally extend my congratulations to you and your colleagues for the highly successful management of your economic affairs which has resulted in such an extraordinary recovery from the loss of the historical mainstay of your economy -- even as you were embarking on a new political relationship. The progress recorded over the past two years since the Lago refinery discontinued operations, with the loss of your major employer, your major source of public revenues and over half of your foreign exchange earnings is worth of commendation.

But the task is not yet over, the challenge remains ahead. We trust that the measures that we may be able to develop together will contribute to making your recovery even more viable and self-sustaining.

In this effort, you have my personal commitment of good faith.

Thank you very much.